

PEACE OF MIND

- A. Introduction: Welcome everyone. We're still livestreaming from home because of the corona pandemic. But we're coming to the end of it. Live meetings will begin again two weeks from tonight (May 29), with social distancing practices in place.
1. We have devoted these last eight weeks to focusing on what is happening and why. Our goal has been to alleviate peoples' fears and increase our faith and trust in God.
 - a. Last week we began to transition a bit and will continue tonight and next week. We've been focusing on the fact that we need to understand what is happening and why. But we also we need to know how to deal with what is going or how to respond to it.
 - b. The return of Jesus Christ to this world is drawing closer and closer and the Bible makes it clear that the years preceding His return will be increasingly difficult. We will see more and more events like this pandemic and the related economic issues.
 2. The Bible reveals that at the time of the Lord's return a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion will be in place, presided over by a false christ, a Satan inspired and empowered man commonly know as the Antichrist. Rev 13:1-18; II Thess 2:1-9; etc.
 - a. The scenario described in the Bible is setting up now as the world moves increasingly toward globalism and away from acknowledging the True God, the Creator of Heaven and earth who has revealed Himself in and through Jesus Christ.
 - b. When people willfully reject the truth of God it has a catastrophic effect on society. It leads to increasingly debased behaviors and ultimately to a reprobate mind or a mind that is unable to make decisions in its own best interests. Rom 1:18-32
 1. Paul wrote that in the years preceding Christ's return, perilous or fierce times will come upon the earth, due in large part to the behavior of people who have rejected God. II Tim 3:1-5
 2. Their reprobate decisions and wicked behaviors will affect our lives more and more in negative ways. We can't avoid it or pray it away. We must learn how to deal with it.
 3. Luke 21:28—Remember what Jesus said when He described the calamity that will come on the earth prior to His return: When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads for your redemption draws near. The idea in the original language is “be elated in joyous expectation”.
 - a. To do this, our perspective has to change. We must learn to see the big picture. God's plan to have a family is unfolding and is about to culminate with the return of Jesus to this world.
 - b. God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. He made the earth to be a home for His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; etc.
 1. Human beings are disqualified from sonship because of our sin, and this world is infused with corruption and death—no longer a suitable home for the family.
 2. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay for sin by dying on the Cross and open the way for sinners to become sons and daughters of God. He will come again to cleanse the family home of corruption and death and establish His eternal kingdom on earth.
 - c. The first Christians lived with the consciousness that a plan is unfolding—and it's a good plan. This awareness made them eager to see the Lord's return. We need to recapture some of their excitement.
 1. For the past two weeks we've been examining how the first Christians viewed the Lord's return and the effect it had on their lives. We focused on some things Peter and Paul wrote.
 2. Tonight, we're going to delve into this a little deeper and examine something else Paul wrote to help us learn how to deal with what is coming on the earth in the years ahead.

- B. The apostle Paul wrote in Phil 4:4-5—Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice! Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand (coming soon) (ESV).
1. Note the very next statement that Paul made: Phil 4:6-7—Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus (NLT).
 - a. Last week we looked at something else Paul wrote. In the context of the Lord's return, Paul admonished believers to hold tightly to the words of life (the word of Jesus Christ) and to shine the light of Christ brightly in this dark world (Phil 2:14-16). Why? Because the most important thing is that people come to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 1. One of the greatest ways to be a light in this dark and troubled world is through possessing peace of mind. Peace of mind is freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts and emotions. (*Webster's Dictionary*).
 2. Not only is peace of mind good for you, it's good for those around you who are lost in darkness of this world. Peace of mind shines brightly because it is such a contrast to the darkness.
 - b. Most of the fear that people deal with is actually anxiety or worry. Anxiety is that uneasiness of mind over what may happen. Anxiety is the opposite of peace.
 1. When you encounter something harmful or dangerous you feel fear. That fight or flight mechanism kicks in and you deal with what you are facing one way or the other.
 2. But fear moves to a whole new level when it is an expectation of danger or fear of the future.
 - A. Fear becomes tormenting because every day leading up to the anticipated danger is affected by something that hasn't yet happened. Fear of the future robs you of peace in the present moment.
 - B. In many cases the anxiety, worry, or fear over a possible future event is actually worse than the event itself because your imagination goes wild and makes it worse and worse.
 2. How do you develop peace of mind? Paul makes this clear in Phil 4:6—You look to God. There are many aspects to what this means. Obviously it must have something to do with understanding the big picture because Paul made this statement in the context of the fact that the coming of the Lord is near.
 - a. Remember that Jesus compared some of the events preceding His return to birth pangs. People are able to deal with the difficult process of birth because they know that it will end well. Matt 24:6-8
 - b. Neither humanity nor this world is as God intended it to be because of sin. But in connection with the return of Jesus, all of this will be rectified.
 1. God wants sons like Jesus. He, in His humanity, is the pattern for God's family (Rom 8:29).
 - A. Our transformation into holy, righteous sons began when we bowed our knee to Jesus as Savior and Lord and will be completed when He returns.
 - B. I John 3:2—Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we'll be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. (NLT)
 2. The earth will be renewed and restored to a fit forever home for God and His family. The apostle John saw the new earth. Rev 21:1-4
 - A. The Greek word translated *new* heaven and *new* earth means new in quality and superior in character not new in terms of existence (*kainos*). This earth, the *first* earth is the pattern for the one to come. We get the word prototype from the Greek word for first (*protos*).
 - B. The first earth passed away or was changed. The Greek word has the idea of passing from one condition to another as opposed to cease to exist. Paul used the word Paul used to describe a new creature in Christ in II Cor 5:17.
 - c. But there's more to it. You must be active as opposed to passive. Note what Paul wrote to

Christians in the city of Colosse. In the context of Jesus' return (Col 3:4) he exhorted them to set their mind on things above.

1. Col 3:1-2—Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in a place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth (NLT).
 2. Let heaven fill your thoughts, in the Greek, means exercise or set the mind. To set means to put or fix in place—set a timer, set a trap; set to record.
3. This brings us back to Phil 4:6-7. Paul wrote Colossians and Philippians while he was in prison (AD 60-62). Keep in mind that this man was facing possible execution. Yet he had no anxiety over of death. He viewed the death of his body as a departure (Phil 1:23; II Tim 4:6). Paul knew that what is ahead is far better. And he knew that he'd get his body back (Phil 3:20-21).
- a. At the root of all fear is fear of death. We're all going to die. It's just a question of when and how. However, we do not cease to exist at death, and thanks to God's plan of redemption, the greater and better part of our existence is ahead—after this life. You have to set your mind on that reality.
 - b. Peace of mind comes from understanding the plan of God and choosing to set your mind on the way things really are—not just how they look in the moment. Phil 4:5-7
 1. Because the Lord will return to complete His good plan (the Lord is at hand) we don't have to worry about the future. And until He comes, we can look to Him for provision in this life.
 2. We go to Him with thanksgiving for what He has done, is doing, and will do. Remember, Jesus Himself said that we don't have to worry about the present moment because we have a Father in Heaven who will take care of us. Matt 6:25-34
 - c. Remember what we discussed last week. Paul prefaced these statements about peace of mind with: Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice (Phil 4:5).
 1. The Greek word translated rejoice means to be cheerful as opposed to feel cheerful. When you cheer someone you urge them on or give them hope. You encourage them.
 2. To experience peace of mind you have to cheer or encourage yourself with accurate information from the Bible and keep your attention there. It must become a habit.
 3. Phil 4:8-9—Let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you (NLT).
- C. The real battle is in our minds. If you don't learn to keep your attention on the truth of God through His Word you will not have peace of mind. You will be in fear and anxiety as times get darker.
1. We must understand that there is a power at work behind the scenes. The devil has always worked to blind men's hearts to the reality of Almighty God and to influence human behavior to accomplish his goals. (Lots of lessons for another day).
 - a. As we discussed a few weeks ago, he working to hold onto his counterfeit kingdom in the earth and oppose the return of the rightful King, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. The number one way he works on human beings is through the mind—presenting us with lies about God, ourselves, and our circumstances—in an attempt to influence our behavior (Eph 2:2; II Cor 11:3; etc.). This is one reason why accurate knowledge of the Truth—God's written Word, the Bible—is so important (Eph 6:11-12). It helps us recognize Satan's lies.
 2. Satan has been working for decades and decades to produce a mindset in as many people as possible that will welcome a world system and a world ruler. Each technological advance in social media communications widens his reach.
 - b. There was a time when Judeo-Christian ethics dominated the western world. Even those who

didn't live in accord with this world view acknowledged and respected it. Not anymore.

1. The world is increasingly abandoning the God of the Bible as revealed in Jesus Christ. As they do so, they are also abandoning truth because God is Truth or ultimate reality. John 14:6
 2. Absolute truth as a concept has largely been discarded in our culture. It's not unusual to hear people say: That's your truth not mine. But truth is objective. It's not based on feelings or opinions. It is not subject to change.
 3. We've produced several generations of youth to whom object facts don't matter—it's what you feel that matters. Their belief systems are based on what they feel rather than on facts. They are completely defenseless against the devil's lies.
- c. Because of the changes in society we are almost constantly bombarded with ideas, opinions, and beliefs that have been influenced by this behind the scenes force. And our lives are being increasingly affected.
2. Have you noticed that much of the news is overstated all the time: This is going to be the coldest winter on record or the worst hurricane ever in recorded history. Two million people are going to die of corona virus in our country before April is over.
- a. As a result, everyone's anxiety level is ramped up over something that hasn't happened yet or never actually does happen. Yet no one seems to recognize this and get stirred up all over again the next time someone says: This is going to be worst thing that ever happened.
 - b. It's easy to get caught up in all of this and be influenced by it. I don't mean that your mind is changed by the increasing antichrist ideas that are permeating society. I mean you get robbed of peace because what you see and hear agitates you. And you aren't skilled at fixing your mind on things above and keeping it there in order to maintain peace of mind.
 - c. In light of the constant barrage of opinions and ideas that permeate our world, remember these words of wisdom from the Bible.
 1. Prov 18:13—What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts (NLT).
 2. Prov 18:17—Any story sounds true until someone tells the other side and sets the record straight (TLB).
 3. Matt 6:34—So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today (NLT).
- D. Conclusion: Peace of mind in the midst of chaos and peril is not only a blessing for you, but it is a powerful witness to those around you. For your own sake and for the sake of others you need to learn to fix your mind on things above so that you have peace of mind.
1. You can walk in peace when you understand what is happening and why, when you know that God will provide for you in the midst of it, and when you know that you will be delivered. God will get us through until He gets us out.
 2. You can walk in peace when you set your mind on these facts and refuse to be moved from them no matter what you see, hear, or feel.
 3. You can stay in peace when you learn to encourage yourself with the truth of God's Word as you praise and thank Him for His faithfulness. More next week!